He Was Cleared Before He Was Accused

By Dr. Hakeem Ali-Bocas Alexander, PhD, as told to Ishai G.A.

Jason Arday's file was examined and answered before the public ever heard his name — I know, because I went and read the whole record myself

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I came to this story the way most people come to anything now. It arrived on a screen, in a Facebook post by Dante Lee, and I had heard pieces of the story before Lee put it in front of me.

His post gave the story more depth than the fragments I had caught, and it struck me hard enough to stop everything else I was doing that night. I want to credit him for that plainly, because his post gave me the impetus for everything that followed, and what I found underneath it is the reason I am writing this.

Lee earns the credit. He runs BlackPR.com and BlackNews.com out of Columbus, Ohio, and he curates the Black News page for well over a million followers, spending his career putting Black achievement and Black business in front of an audience the big outlets rarely serve.

His post was a short summary, and my own digging went far deeper than it. That is respect, stated plainly: his spark started this fire, and the least I can do is name the man who struck it.

Read his original post here: Dante Lee's Facebook post of 26 November 2026 (https://www.facebook.com/dantelee/posts/pfbid02Gr7gjLaquhxWWnFkEMHbE9iTiPdCMhDjfy6BW5XRjEhZEAfdqMWueDqQ524cXJNDl). His work lives at BlackPR.com (https://blackpr.com) and BlackNews.com (https://blacknews.com), and his Black News page runs at facebook.com/blacknews (https://www.facebook.com/blacknews).

I started with questions. A man had resigned from one of the most famous universities on earth and died days later, and now a second university was clearing his work months after his death.

How did he die? What exactly was he accused of copying, and who made the accusation? I had no conclusions when I began, and I distrust any writer who claims he would have started anywhere else.

Here is the skeleton of it, because a reader deserves the bones before my feelings about them. Jason Arday earned his PhD at Liverpool John Moores University in 2015, and in 2023, at 37, he became the youngest Black professor in the history of Cambridge.

A panel at Liverpool examined his thesis and concluded in March 2026 that its citation problems were honest and reasonable error. On 21 July 2026, a philosopher named Nathan Cofnas published the plagiarism allegations to the world on Substack, and Arday resigned on 5 August.

Nine days later he was found dead at home. An inquest opened on 26 August and sits adjourned, with no cause of death published, and on 26 November 2026 Queen's University Belfast cleared a later paper of his in full.

The full chronology, with every date and document, runs in the companion investigation on HAKEYM News. This piece is about what I make of the man at the center of it, and of the man who came after him.

When I first heard the sequence, I will admit my mind went to suspicion. A resignation, a sudden death, clearances arriving only afterward — the shape of it invites dark questions, and I asked them.

The longer I sat with the record, the more the suspicion drained out of me and left something heavier behind. What I feel now is sadness.

A colleague of Arday's, the Cambridge autism professor Simon Baron-Cohen, told the BBC that Arday felt he couldn't go on. His family said the campaign of misinformation was too much for Jason, describing a gentle man who always wanted to see the best in everyone.

I will not pretend to know what happened inside that house in Battersea, and the coroner has published no cause for anyone to build on. I know the order of events, and the order of events is grim enough on its own: a man was accused in public in July, resigned in August, and was buried before the next clearance arrived in November.

Something about that sequence has stayed with me since I read it. A person should never reach the point where the pressure of a public campaign feels larger than his own life, and this record reads like a man who reached exactly that point.

Now let me be fair, because fairness is the whole discipline of a piece like this. The core of Cofnas's factual claim is a count of passages: more than 100 passages in Arday's 2015 thesis that The Telegraph described as identical or nearly identical to a 2009 dissertation in the same field.

I want this on the record in my own name. If that count is accurate, it is significant, and I refuse to wave it away because I dislike the man who published it.

A false theory about race proves nothing about whether somebody copied text. People plagiarize, it happens in every field, and a serious reader holds both ideas in his head at the same time.

Cofnas also had every right to publish. Cambridge ran its own process on the complaints against his earlier writing about race and cleared him on free speech grounds in October 2025, and I called that clearance righteous when I read it, because it was.

He is a learned man, and he phrases an argument the way learned men do, cleanly and with force. His central charge against Cambridge — that the university protected a symbol, a role-model appointment, long after questions were raised — carries points I cannot dismiss, and I have said on the record that those points hold merit.

Hold all of that, and then look at the man himself. Cofnas built his public name on papers about race and intelligence, arguing in print years before Arday's name crossed his desk that group differences in intelligence deserve open study and that a true meritocracy would empty elite positions of Black people almost entirely.

That is the lens he carried into this case. A man who writes that, and then goes hunting through the thesis of Cambridge's youngest Black professor, is a man looking for something specific.

I know something about how exposure works, because my living depends on it. I drive for a living — shopping, delivering, moving through grocery stores and across Hampton Roads roads all day, every day.

A commuter has a handful of road incidents in a year. I have more, and the reason is simple arithmetic: I am out there more, so more of everything finds me, the good and the bad alike.

A man hunting for wrongdoing works the same way. Spend your days scanning for fraud with a theory already loaded, and eventually the scan returns a hit, because you have exposed yourself to the search a thousand times more than anyone casually passing by.

Most of the time that search finds nothing, and the hunter moves on. This time it found a thesis with real problems in it, and I will concede what fairness demands: once he found it, he may have had just cause to pursue it.

The starting point is where I part from him. His motives for picking up the scan in the first place were never just, and my assertion stands where I put it: this is a racist man who went looking for somebody to damage, convinced in advance that the dishonesty had to be there somewhere.

Underneath his whole campaign sits a claim I reject completely, and I want to answer it in my own voice. The claim says programs for diversity, equity and inclusion lift people into chairs they never earned, and Arday's career was Exhibit A.

The history of this country answers that claim every single day. Black inventors built abundantly in the Western world and then watched the credit walk away into other men's names — peanut butter, the traffic light, the cotton gin, and a long roll of work that textbooks attached to whoever stood nearest the patent office.

Nobody has ever needed a diversity program to certify Black intellect. The intellect was always there, producing, and the record of stolen credit proves it over and over again.

These programs exist because the doors were barred. Capable people were blocked institutionally from higher education and from the professions, generation after generation, by structural and racial prejudice that had nothing to do with ability.

That is the part people refuse to understand. The barrier was the problem, every time, and the capability of the people standing behind it was never in question.

One more finding deserves its own light before I close, because it changed how I weigh the whole file. Queen's University Belfast examined a paper Arday published in 2021, six years after the thesis, and cleared it outright.

Read that wording closely. Liverpool's panel had spoken of honest error, which accepts that something went wrong and judges the intent behind it; Queen's found no concerns at all, which means the later work gave its examiners nothing to forgive.

That matters to me. A scholar whose later work stands clean, examined by a different institution with fresh eyes, lends real weight to the idea that the early failure was exactly what Liverpool called it — error, inside one thesis, under supervision the panel itself found wanting.

The problem stayed in 2015. His own hand, writing his own work, is what the later record shows.

So this is where I land. A self-funded student with two GCSEs worked supermarket shelves and night shifts into a Cambridge chair, got accused by a man who had been preparing the accusation's theory for years, got cleared before the storm and cleared again after it, and died in the nine days between his resignation and everything that came too late to help him.

I keep returning to those nine days. Whatever the inquest eventually says, the record already says enough: the answers existed before the accusations went public, and the man at the center of it never got to live inside the vindication that was slowly assembling around his name.

That is the sadness I started with, and I have nowhere better to put it than here. Rest is owed to Jason Arday, and an honest reading is owed to everyone still arguing about him.

A note on the tool

This piece was researched and written with Muse, by Meta, the tool I use while I drive. If you join through my invite and redeem it on time, we both receive the tokens.

1. Join Muse at https://muse.ai/join, or download the Muse app and join there.
2. Within 48 hours of joining, enter the invite code YM6FGI — in the app: Settings > Redeem token; on the web: Settings > General > Usage > Redeem invite code.
3. That redemption is what credits both sides with 1 billion tokens. Joining without redeeming the code inside the window credits nobody.

About the writer — Ishai G.A. is a writer and correspondent covering Hampton Roads for UniquilibriuM. She works as assistant and interviewing journalist to Dr. Hakeem Ali-Bocas Alexander, and her reporting appears across his publications, including Monarch City Buzz and HAKEYM News.

Books by Dr. Hakeem Ali-Bocas Alexander

His Bookspace store carries the books in print-ready editions: https://bookspace.com/uniquilibrium

- Sovereign Frequency — $6.35 — https://bookspace.com/uniquilibrium/sovereign-frequency
- Non-Consensual: The Secret Science of Human Programming — $5.99 — https://bookspace.com/uniquilibrium/non-consensual
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